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### Deposited in DRO:

01 June 2021

### Version of attached file:

Published Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

### Citation for published item:

Strange, Julie-Marie (2021) 'When John met Benny: class, pets and family life in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.', *The History of the Family*, 26 (2). pp. 214-235.

### Further information on publisher's website:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2021.1897028>

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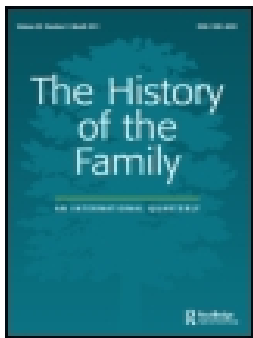
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To cite this article: Julie-Marie Strange (2021): When John met Benny: class, pets and family life in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, *The History of the Family*, DOI: [10.1080/1081602X.2021.1897028](https://doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2021.1897028)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2021.1897028>



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## When John met Benny: class, pets and family life in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain

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### ABSTRACT

Histories of human-animal companionship have expanded in recent years but studies of British pet keeping prior to the twentieth century have been skewed towards the middle and upper classes. Such models risk establishing middle-class values and practices as the norm, creating the implicit assumption that working-class difference amounts to deviance or, that middle-class norms 'trickle down' the socio-economic scale eventually. While it is broadly acknowledged that working-class families kept birds or animals in domestic settings, there has been little consideration of what animal companionship meant in Victorian and Edwardian working-class family life or, more to the point, the ways in which pet keeping was classed and why this matters. Drawing on three principal methods, this essay explores what pet keeping meant in the financial, spatial and affective context of British working-class family life. It tries to understand how human family members could experience or, at least, articulate a sense of connection with animal members of the household. Resources of time, space and money shaped what pets were possible for people to keep, where they were kept and how relationships with those animals were forged. The choices people made in precarious or restricted material circumstances exposes the classed character of pet keeping and the 'hierarchical entanglement' of human-animal relations within a working-class context.

### KEYWORDS

Class; Animals; Emotion;  
Family; Victorian

Histories of human-animal companionship have expanded in recent years but studies of British pet keeping prior to the twentieth century have been skewed towards the middle and upper classes (e.g., Tague, 2015; Kete, 1994; Grier, 2006). This follows a trend in other fields relating to Victorian family life and emotion: landmark texts typically focus on elites (e.g., Davidoff, 2012; Dixon, 2015; Jalland, 1996), privilege linguistic articulacy and can appear to have little to do with working-class people. It is only relatively recently that scholars have begun to address Victorian working-class emotional life (Griffin, 2018; Strange, 2005, 2015). Historians privileging elite lives have cited the comparative paucity of archival material (particularly personal testimony) for working people's interior lives as the reason for this exclusion (material is more readily available from the 1920s onwards). Such models risk establishing middle-class values and practices as the norm, creating the

implicit assumption that working-class difference amounts to a deficit or, that middle-class norms 'trickle down' the socio-economic scale eventually.

While it is broadly acknowledged that working-class families kept birds or animals in domestic settings, there has been little consideration of what animal companionship meant in Victorian and Edwardian working-class family life or the ways in which pet keeping was classed and why this matters. If animals have been peripheral to studies of family life in general (see Introduction), the inclusion of pets in working-class histories facilitates reflection on how family, home and affect were classed experiences for humans and animals and how human-animal relations in a working-class environment operated as 'hierarchical entanglement' (Saha, 2017). It is also important for historians of family life to uncouple working-class lives from middle-class norms that situate working-class culture in a deficit model. We can't begin to understand the norms and values of working-class relationships with animals, or their norms and values more generally, if we don't take them on their own terms. This has methodological implications. The working-class archive is fragmentary, especially with regard to animals, and empirical detail on working-class lives often derives from reformist or critical commentary that focused on cruelty to animals, sports or the perceived irresponsibility of pet keeping in straitened economic circumstances (Amato, 2015; Hribal, 2003; Johnes, 2007; Kean, 1998; Worboys et al., 2018). If violence, cruelty and neglect were part of some people's lives, they were hardly unique to the working classes. As Hilda Kean's analysis of the 'pet massacre' in the Second World War demonstrates, human-animal relations often depend on individual circumstances (and note just how many middle-class householders killed their pets in Kean's study, 2017).

This essay explores what pet keeping meant in the financial, spatial and affective context of British working-class family life. Economic cost and the availability of space shaped who had access to pet keeping, which species were viable to keep, and the material context in which embodied encounters between human and animal family members took place. Drawing on Monique Scheer's reworking of Bourdieu, the essay analyses the practices that made a 'pet' relationship (everyday habits, rituals, pastimes, spaces) within a specific working-class habitus (Scheer, 2012) and the meanings working-class humans invested in those practices retrospectively. The essay does not try to understand animals' emotional lives (on the difficulties of this see Pearson, 2019) but considers, instead, working-class people's identification of an emotional repertoire specific to relations with animals. The essay also engages with what sociologists Jennifer Mason and Becky Tipper identified as moments of 'potent connection' across species, affinities or flashes of empathy that prompt a sense of 'ineffable kinship' (Mason, 2018; Tipper, 2011). Mason argues that the idea of 'affinities' permits a more creative (imaginative) approach to understanding individuals' sensory experience of connection, especially where empirical data is sparse and affinities are, by their nature, fleeting. Taking inspiration from Mason, this essay tries to identify how and when working-class humans might encounter and cultivate 'ineffable kinship' with animals. It extends this to consider how individuals tried to make sense of human-animal affect through establishing 'pet practices' and relating stories of broader family 'affinities' (or allegiances).

The relative paucity of archival materials on the working-class family should not preclude attempts to recover 'the invisible' (Fudge, 2018; Salmi, 2011), including animal actors (Kean, 2017; Pearson, 2015). While contemporary middle-class commentators

claimed the authority to advise on (and interfere with) working-class homes and practices, historical analyses that measure working-class experience against middle-class norms reinforce the assumption that bourgeois norms are *the* measure. This has implications for the significance we attach to class as a marker of difference and how we can avoid reinforcing the inequities of the archive to generate more inclusive histories. Correcting the biases of the past is not about simply turning the scholarly gaze towards the marginalized; it demands that we critique the normative assumptions that bring such groups into focus. Here, my express concern is to avoid comparison with middle-class pet keeping, emotive norms and family life. While there were undoubtedly cross-class similarities in pet and family practices, such comparisons typically imply a supposed 'lack' in working-class culture by, however inadvertently, perpetuating a model whereby material insecurity limits the possibility of meaningful affective lives or ascribes aspirational values to working-class practices that bear passing resemblance to those of the middle classes (see Griffin, 2018). Most working-class people desired more material security for sure; it is less clear that they wanted to *be* middle class. This essay, then, identifies human-animal emotional practices to illuminate the contingencies of affective attachments and increase the range of affective agents in working-class culture. It takes a broad definition of working class to indicate families where the principal breadwinner(s) was engaged in manual labour (from unskilled to skilled although many families could move between categories over the life course) and identifies the 'pet' as an animal residing within the boundaries of home (including bricked backyards and gardens) with whom one or more family member has a companionate relationship. For the purposes of this essay, I deploy the hetero-normative conception of 'family' used in the archives accessed.

## 1. Methodology

Most archival material on working-class life in the Victorian and Edwardian period was created by the state or welfare agencies offering Olympian perspectives on the problems of poverty while proposing correctives. This essay uses just one of these texts, an illustrated feature, 'Poverty's Pets' (1900) by T. Sparrow, a domestic visitor (akin to a social worker), in the nonconformist magazine *Quiver*. After ten years visiting working-class homes, Sparrow claimed 'intimate communion with Slumland and its inhabitants'. Deploying the representative strategies of her class, she insisted on pejorative adjectives such as 'poverty' and 'slumland', despite describing many of her subjects by their occupations. Dialect to identify working-class narrators further emphasised their difference from Sparrow and her assumed reader. Invoking familiar anxieties about the limits of working-class sensibilities at this time (Strange, 2005), Sparrow asserted that the working classes were 'overflowing with love but they want guidance as to the direction in which to bestow it'. According to Sparrow, even when families tried to be kind to pets, their lack of educational, emotional and financial capital meant that animals suffered: working-class pet keeping was implicated in disordered economic, emotional and moral priorities. Men in particular fostered inappropriate associations with animals being either too affectionate (a former gamekeeper turned labourer John and his fox Benny), too indulgent (a sailor and his squirrel Jack), too sensual (overfeeding and cossetting puppies), too unpredictable (training a monkey only to assault it when drunk), too selfish (most of the men) or too immoral (a thief with a pet owl),

a reflection of commentators' generic anxieties about feckless working-class masculinity. Typical in its narration of working-class lives for middle-class readerships, the feature was unusual in its detailed focus on pets in the working-class interior and on one family in particular, John, his unnamed wife, children and their pet fox, Benny. Like many commentators on so-called 'slum' lives (M. E. Loane is the best known and most sympathetic to working-class perspectives; e.g., Loane, 1908, 1910), Sparrow probably conflated numerous encounters with working people with some artistic licence for narrative effect. Here, I ignore most of Sparrow's value judgements on the families she encountered and, instead, take the empirical detail of her narrative to read against the grain and posit alternative interpretations of her account of pet keeping in working-class homes.

Second, I draw on a handful of amateur photographs of dogs in domestic exteriors dating from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. I identify the subjects as working class by their clothing, context and environment (Preston, 2014; Tinkler, 2013). Photographs of working-class home interiors and families are relatively rare and, given the rudimentary technology available on limited budgets, most working-class amateur photographers could only take images outdoors, to mark special occasions (such as sons or husbands leaving for war), or to celebrate particular personalities and relationships. Photographs were a luxury and most of the photographs here focus on dogs, the most expensive pet to keep, but also the animal thought to forge the strongest bond with human companions. Sometimes, the image is a portrait of the dog; more common was for the dog to be photographed with his male keeper. Here, I read for the materiality of domestic settings and the arrangement of subject material for insights into the embodied practices of animal companionship.

Finally, I explore the literary and rhetorical devices working-class people used to describe animal companions in retrospective testimonies. Histories of emotion have typically relied on the value, past and present, invested in written records of a literate class. In contrast, working-class subjectivities are far more fragmentary and even more so with regard to pets. It is worthwhile here to identify the absence and presence of pets in different kinds of testimonies, first, because it tells us something about the status of animals and, second, because it will help identify the kinds of testimonies that are the focus of attention here and why. Men wrote the majority of published life stories between the 1930s and 60s to extol self-improvement, religious conversion, and political conviction, concentrating on education, labour politics, activism and careers (Gagnier, 1991; Griffin, 2013; Humphries, 2010; Strange, 2015; Vincent, 1981). Many of these stories demonstrate the expectation of and, in some cases, resistance to middle-class assimilation as socially mobile authors attempted to craft a story of origin, growth and belonging. Some mention household animals as incidental to other stories or in a generic ('the cat' or 'the rabbit') rather than a named sense. These accounts rarely advance detail of pets and are not the focus here. The omission does not indicate the absence of pet keeping in the authors' working-class childhood so much as their anxiety to be taken seriously and the perception that pets had no place in such narratives: focused on crafting anthropocentric political subjectivities, few of these authors paid much attention to human-centred relationships either, especially beyond childhood (Gagnier, 1991).

The exception to this trend is 'commemorative' life stories: accounts that convey detail of everyday life, published or collected largely between the 1960s and 80s (with some

later additions) as part of social, family and community historians' rush to record working-class lives before the late-Victorian generation died out (Rogers & Cuming, 2018). These testimonies are the focus here. Many of these authors wrote for their families or communities; few related social mobility beyond gratitude for the advent of the welfare state; and most might be described as 'nostalgic' in crafting stories of a world perceived to have vanished (although these stories were not uncritical of the past or present, Jones, 2010). The essay also draws on oral histories conducted in the 1970s and 80s. These narrators are also more representative of those who did not experience upward social mobility. Again, few respondents recounted keeping pets because interviews were shaped by the specific research priorities of social historians seeking to recover the class and gender politics of late-Victorian and Edwardian life, they were not concerned with human-animal relations and interviewer status (educational and classed) inflected the encounter with specific power dynamics. Where respondents began to talk 'off topic', interviewers and transcribers could give short shrift to material deemed irrelevant (Summerfield, 2018).

Of the few written and oral testimonies that mention pets, there is a bias towards narrators from white, English, urban, protestant backgrounds with semi-skilled or skilled male heads of household. Catholic and Jewish authors are represented in memoir and oral history but many of these accounts reflect broader structural inequalities with family members typically trapped in unskilled, low paid, casual work and poor housing. These families were less likely to access pet keeping. Jewish families may have observed religious guidance that classified dogs as unclean while nascent Islamic communities, concentrated largely in port towns and cities (notably Liverpool, Cardiff and South Shields), were characterised by seafaring male heads of household who lived in boarding houses that were not conducive to animal companionship. There is little surviving evidence of pet keeping in Chinese communities at this time. Rural households often had animal members with utility function, although cats in both urban and rural homes could inhabit the role of 'mouser' and pet for different family members at different times. Rural children enjoyed easy access to wild birds and small animals that could be captured and tamed. Most testimonies recalled cats and dogs, animals with longer life spans and greater capacity for tactile and empathetic interaction.

Life stories proffer empirical detail of social worlds. Framed within the narrator's present, they also reflect attempts to give meaning to the past (Rogers & Cuming, 2018; Summerfield, 2018). Authors used stories of pets to acknowledge the importance of animals in everyday life, relate family values, identify allegiances in family life and explain life choices or as metaphors for other issues. For authors writing in the second half of the twentieth century when approximately half the population kept pets, supported by the growth of a massive industry dedicated to servicing human-animal family needs, the inclusion of pets in a family story could signpost social and cultural difference across time (especially when drawing attention to broader shifts in animal welfare) and familiarity, making chronologically distant social actors more relatable. Two authors writing within the commemorative genre exemplify how pets could be freighted with multi-layered meaning. Sidney Day, born in London 1912 (the cusp of the period discussed here), spent time in prison as an adult. Adopting the register of playful defiance in the face of authority, his story described a world where petty crime and violence, ingenuity, humour and bravado were facets of a rich and complex working-class culture that ultimately triumphed over adversity. Pets – particularly dogs – exemplify working-class generosity

(taking in strays), loyalty (faithful companionship), resourcefulness and culture (catching wild birds and showing them in the pub), cleverness (training pets), care (minimising animal fear or suffering) and casual cruelty (letting dogs fight). Grace Foakes, born 1901, adopted a more gossipy tone to relay the specific challenges working-class women faced bringing up large families on limited resources. In Foakes's memoir, animals highlight warmth and humour in materially precarious lives and draw out the affective loyalties of family life.

## 2. *The economics of pet keeping*

In a context where incomes could be precarious, the most significant barrier to working-class pet keeping was economic cost and it is worth taking a broad overview of what these costs were to contextualise the accessibility of pet keeping. Street directories and surveys of Victorian and Edwardian towns and cities identify a plethora of bird shops, market stalls and street sellers that suggest a thriving market for working-class pet keeping. Undoubtedly, the cheapest and most popular 'pet' was the bird, reflected in the ubiquity of bird dealers in working-class districts, but street sellers without overheads sold all kinds of animals at cheaper prices (see for instance, Mayhew, 1861-1862 ; Slaters, 1876). Early twentieth-century photographs of tenements described as 'rookeries' (part of the loaded nomenclature to describe lower income districts) show small birdcages hanging outside windows and on balconies (Willes, 2014, p. 236). Non-British birds, such as parrots, parakeets, cockatoos, Java sparrows and East Indian finches manifest in multi-sensory ways Britain's links to global trade, otherwise encountered in inanimate commodities and advertising. By the end of the nineteenth century, a thriving trade in domestic bred budgies and canaries catered for a large working and middle-class market. Small animals such as rabbits, white rats, mice and guinea pigs, easily housed in backyards or gardens, were popular children's pets. Cats were frequently kept as mousers but could become a pet for some family members. Less familiar pets were squirrels, monkeys, hedgehogs, reptiles and foxes.

Dogs, the archetypal Victorian pet, were the most expensive pet purchase and took up precious space. Although some families clearly did keep them, dogs were a luxury in working-class families. A major obstacle was the annual cost of the dog license, introduced in 1867 (to replace the 'Dog Tax') to address fears around hydrophobia (rabies) and strays. Critics declaimed the tax as designed to exclude working-class people from canine companionship because of misplaced assumptions about cruelty and lack of responsibility. Some argued that the licence generated cruelty by forcing those that could not pay to abandon dogs or face criminalization (Pemberton & Worboys, 2007, p. 79). That the fee was due every January, the cruellest month in terms of reduced availability of work and higher fuel costs, amplified the class-based character of the legislation. Animal welfare charities, notably the Canine Defence League (later the Dogs Trust), established in 1891 to 'protect dogs from torture and ill usage of any kind', raised money to fund (partially at least) the cost of the licence for working-class families. Working to keep dogs off the streets, the charity saw the annual licence fee as a principal cause of high numbers of strays. By the mid 1920s, they issued almost 3500 licences a year to poorer dog owners (Canine Defence League, 1927). When working families did keep dogs then, it is important to acknowledge the extraordinary economic cost of doing so. The dog tax epitomised



broader anxieties, laid out by Sparrow, about the suitability of working-class families keeping pets. Even relatively comfortable families with skilled or semi-skilled breadwinners could be tipped into financial disaster by sickness, injury or death (Johnson, 1985). Spending on pets in this context could be viewed as frivolous.

What commentators like Sparrow overlooked was that most families suited the pet to the pocket. The children's pocket money market was considerable. Some birds cost pennies a pair while gold and silver fish were even cheaper. Rabbits, mice, hedgehogs and guinea pigs demanded more outlay but were still relatively cheap one off purchases. According to one oral history respondent, almost any pet could be bought at turn-of-the-century Preston market for a shilling (Lancaster, B3P). Dogs were the real luxury, even from street sellers. St Bernard's, collies and retrievers, popular breeds in nineteenth-century literature and visual culture on account of their perceived loyalty, were rare in working-class households on account of their size and expense. Much more common were terriers, cheaper and smaller, and dogs of no particular breed, the 'mongrel' (Worboys et al., 2018).

The initial pet purchase could be circumvented altogether. Enterprising children could trap wild birds, although legislation from the 1880s onwards made this illegal (Donald, 2020). Rabbits, squirrels and foxes could be trapped or rescued when injured and nursed back to health. Breeding pets could multiply animals to keep, gift or sell to neighbours. Sailors often brought birds and animals such as monkeys from their travels as souvenirs (D. Cowper, 1964, p. 61). Cats were the easiest acquisition. The stray cat was so ubiquitous in urban environments it represented a public health problem. The challenge with female cats was disposal of the kittens she would inevitably produce. One 1890s Liverpool family adopted a stray that produced forty-nine kittens over her lifetime with them (Daisy D. Cowper, 1964, p. 75). Stray dogs, common in many urban centres, represented perceived risk in the form of possible aggression or disease, particularly rabies, although this need not stop families from taking them in (Bolton, 27a; Pemberton & Worboys, 2007).

Pets necessitated costs beyond initial acquisition too. Tiny wooden birdcages, small animal cages and kennels were one off purchases although the resourceful family could repurpose other materials to make these items. Collars (available in brass, leather or steel) and leashes could be bought new for pennies, acquired second-hand or improvised from rope or string. Food demanded commitment for the animal's lifetime. The growth of the birdseed market in the latter half of the nineteenth century was phenomenal but it was also relatively cheap as far as pet purchases went. Although the production of manufactured pet foods expanded in this period, the working-class market for these goods remained marginal as cats and dogs' meat sellers sold horseflesh by weight or on skewers well into the early twentieth century. Small animals were often fed waste or food that was foraged (Foakes, 2011, pp. 224–5). Veterinary medicine was rudimentary and wildly expensive. As commentators from all social classes observed, people who spent the most on pets were those unburdened by the expense of children, further indicating that pet spends varied according to other demands on the purse (e.g., Mayhew). Although commercial pet cemeteries flourished from the 1880s, they catered for a moneyed clientele. Working-class families buried pets in gardens or private land if accessible but lack of resource forced many urban dwellers to dispose of dead pets as if they were waste (Armitage, 1974, p. 106).

Histories of working-class household budgets indicate that men typically kept some of their wage for personal use (Chinn, 1988; Davies, 1992; Roberts, 1984). Some men would give children pocket money from this; otherwise, spends went on bus or tram fares, food extras, and male leisure (Ross, 1993: 34; Strange, 2015, pp. 72–3). The majority of pets in labouring homes belonged to men (dogs mostly) and children (small animals and birds) and, apart from cats or dogs meat which likely fell into household budgeting, extraordinary pet spends were the domain of masculine leisure budgets. Certainly, photographs of working people with pets are overwhelmingly skewed towards men and dogs, a reflection of patriarchal claims to extraordinary resources (Griffin, 2020). One photo exemplifies this. A man sits in his backyard in weekend clothing, flat cap and boots with a terrier sat on his knee. This image celebrates man and dog but two women hover in the shadow of a scullery doorway in the top left hand side of the image. One rests a hand on her hip as the other stands behind with arms folded (Hall, 2002, p. 11). The women are peripheral to the image and yet their (probably accidental) presence highlights the interdependency of man, dog and women (particularly their labour) to facilitate the practices and spaces of family life, including accommodating men's pets in domestic settings.

In another image, the locus of the dog in men's leisure culture is more striking. Two soldiers standing either side of a Christmas tree enjoy a backyard smoke. At the foot of the Christmas tree sits a white terrier (Hall, 2002, p. 55). The arrangement is too neat to be accidental and implies cross-species camaraderie and masculine togetherness. The festive reference fixes the moment in ritual time with strong familial associations (Armstrong, 2010). Other photographs are subtler in suggesting dogs were men's companions. In one, a couple pose on the pavement at the front of their house (the door opens straight into the street) in mimicry of a classic studio portrait; woman seated, husband stood to the side. Between them stands a terrier type dog wearing a collar and tag. The couple don't touch but the dog presses her shoulder against the man's leg (Hall, 2000, p. 16).

If expenditure on pets signalled masculine privilege – or the indulgence of children – it was also a test of economic security. When families faced financial disaster on account of breadwinner illness, death or unemployment, the precarious status of pets as 'luxuries' was exposed. Joe Ayre, born 1908, recalled that when his family hit hard times, his dad attempted to pawn the parrot in its cage (Ayre, 1978, p. 5). At one terraced home in Edwardian London, a cart driver kept two pet rabbits he 'idolized' in homemade hutches in the backyard. He took extra jobs to buy rabbit food, a strategy (narrative and practical) that identified how additional labour (paid and unpaid) could be an emotional practice for animal and human dependants: providing for the rabbits didn't detract from providing for human family. But in representing *extra* costs, the rabbits sat outside the bounds of *family* (necessity) and, however 'idolized', their status as luxuries (extras) reflected the primary responsibilities of a male breadwinner. Certainly, the law demanded that a man had a legal obligation to provide for his children (Broughton & Rogers, 2007) but made no such provision for his pets. When the family hit hard times and there was 'no money', father slaughtered his rabbits to feed his human dependents (Thompson Collection: Walisher). Such practices exposed the precarious position of pets in human-animal hierarchies of obligation and how these might conflict with hierarchies of affection. For the daughter reflecting on this in adulthood, her father's paternal obligations meant he 'had to kill' the animal dependents, despite these being the dependents that he chose to spend time with. In retrospect, the killing wasn't narrated so much as a sacrifice for the

children but a moment where economic necessity made no allowance for elective bonds of affection: 'Broke his heart. But there. No money you see' (Thompson: Walisher).

Pets in labouring homes were, then, hyper vulnerable to economic vagaries: pets might be surrendered as purse strings tightened or when dog licences were due while the status of rabbits and chickens, potential foodstuff, was especially shaky. Such decisions writ large the low status of animals in a human-centred hierarchy of economic obligation. There was scope for confusion between family members about some animals' status too. Parents might keep hens or rabbits (and sometimes pigs) as an intentional food source only for children to name and grow attached to them. Both Grace Foakes and Dorothy Scannell recalled their fathers slaughtering ('murder', charged Scannell) rabbits they considered pets or, as Scannell said, 'a friend' (Scannell, 1977: 108; Foakes, 21). Such predicaments expose how pet keeping exemplified and reproduced structural inequities, first, between humans as working-class lives were typically more vulnerable to economic catastrophe and men staked prior claims to economic privileges and, secondly, between humans and animals as pets were expendable in a way human dependents were not, even if other elective practices (caring, providing for and spending time with) indicated the importance of animal bonds in everyday life.

### 3. Animals at home

In addition to economic costs, animal companions needed space. In working-class homes, where space was often at a premium, the management of animal movement and dirt demanded additional labour and planning. While this could be a source of antagonism between human family members, it also indicates the contributions animals made to the domestic environment. The detail of John and Benny's companionship outlined in Sparrow's essay 'Poverty's Pets' is a good place to identify the place of animals in the home and how it could change across the human-animal life course. Prior to marriage, gamekeeper John rescued (fox) Benny from a trap, nursed him back to health and determined to make a pet of him. After marriage, John's wife insisted on containing Benny's foxiness within her boundaries of domestic order and hygiene (no fox on the bed). When the wife accused Benny of nipping the baby, John agreed to cage the fox. Benny still made his presence felt through his fox smell, toilet needs, nutritional requirements, and the sounds he made. Given John's paid work, his wife performed most of this labour and, as Benny aged and sickened, she cooked special foodstuffs to tempt him to eat. Two small children were encouraged to play outdoors to avoid disturbing him. Men's chairs were typically next to the fireplace and Benny's cage was likely placed close to John's chair to facilitate tactility. Home and family life took Benny into account but this was enabled by the increasingly narrow parameters of Benny's life.

Managing Benny's needs alongside those of a busy household clearly demanded extra labour. The work involved in keeping working-class homes clean was phenomenal, especially if husbands were employed in 'dirty' trades (such as mining), while stretching resources to feed and clothe everyone could demand ingenuity. Most working-class families ate, worked and took leisure in the same room that housed the cooking range. The inclusion of animals in these spaces contributed to heat (stifling in summer), materiality and smell. Given the effort keeping animals required, it shouldn't surprise us that

women were less keen to let pets, especially dogs, indoors viewing them as potentially dirty, disruptive and, given their appetite, the enemy of thrift (Bolton, 28b; Bolton, 18). Where families lived in tenements, cats (and rabbits) might have the benefit of a 'soil box' that required regular emptying (Burton, 1958, p. 51). Even birdcages necessitated cleaning.

Keeping pets, then, involved familial negotiation. A labourer bringing home a wild baby rabbit couldn't expect his wife to be thrilled when she already had ten 'babies' of her own. Collective pleading from children and spouse meant she gave way but with conditions: the rabbit had to be fed scraps and trained to defecate in the privy (Foakes, 224). A woman might refuse the offer of a free puppy only to capitulate in the face of an indulgent father (a handloom knitter) and weeping daughter: she did all the labour managing the dog's needs in domestic space while father, who took his leisure with the terrier, adored him 'more than anybody' (Thompson: Williams). This is not to say that women didn't like pets but different practices generated different kinds of responses: dutifully cleaning up after wet dog evoked feelings from frustration through to satisfaction and didn't necessitate human-animal contact; playing games with a dog was more likely to be tactile and associated with pleasure. Even the dirty work of caring for animals created a bond of sorts: there is nothing like cleaning faeces, urine or vomit for generating intimate knowledge of another living body and its needs, even in the face of resentment. Despite attempts to contain its behaviour, the wild baby rabbit, 'full of mischief', created significant labour (getting soot everywhere, attempting to dig indoors, removing bed clothes). That the mother accommodated this behaviour suggested to others her fondness for the rabbit, the demands of his participation in family life offset by his identity as a source of humour and mutual tactility (Foakes, 224).

Strategies to manage animal movement indoors varied. Caged birds could be located in bedrooms or hung outdoors during the daytime for the bird's benefit and to alleviate pressure on living space (Bolton, 100; Lancaster, M1L). Pets could be restricted to specific rooms or assigned particular pieces of furniture. Indoor cats and dogs typically had beds in the living room and were not (in theory) allowed to roam upstairs. Animals such as squirrels, foxes, rabbits or guinea pigs that lived indoors were often caged. Women could, of course, attempt to harness animal characteristics in supporting the management of home and family. Hedgehogs ate beetles and cats in this period were kept primarily as vermin control (though they might also bring vermin into the house: D. Cowper, 20). One mother whose sailor son brought her a monkey, Toby, from India in 1890s Liverpool accepted him on account of her juvenile sons interest in playing with the monkey rather than roaming the streets (Agnes A. Cowper, 1952, p. 59).

Some animals were much more likely to be kept outside, an arrangement that mirrored a spatial sexual division of labour. Sidney Day's childhood home had a back garden with pens and sheds for chickens, ducks and rabbits, an 'aviary full of wild birds' and kennels for the family dogs (5). As the domain of father and children, these outdoor animals were – in theory at least – their responsibility (Day, 2006: 5). Although one late-Victorian family had only one child, father still kept his brown and white collie, of whom he was 'very fond', in a kennel outside (Lancaster, H4L). He spent Saturday afternoons shampooing and grooming the dog, practices associated with a masculine leisure culture of dog keeping. Even outdoors, dogs could find their movement restricted on account of competing household demands. One photograph shows the long narrow garden of a terrace with greenhouse,

cold frame and beds of fruit and vegetables. Productive gardening was usually associated with men's leisure while a line to hang laundry (women's labour) has been positioned along the path to protect the soil. An older man holds his dog on a leash. No other photograph surveyed for this essay has a leash and the appearance of one here implies anxiety that the dog might damage the garden (Hall, 2002, p. 188). Joe Ayre's family moved up in the world when their 'better' house, the same size as the last, had the benefit of a bricked backyard where he and his siblings kept a 'little menagerie'; their responsibility in their play space (Ayre, 1978, p. 4).

Photographs of dogs in backyards typically depict a male keeper and a wooden kennel. These range from neat, purpose built structures covered with climbing plants to more ramshackle, piecemeal affairs. Evidence of scratched or chewed kennels in photographs suggests that women's anxieties about protecting indoor furniture (especially if acquired on hire purchase) were not misplaced. Sometimes, though, animals were housed outdoors because human keepers believed it was better for them. Toby the monkey spent winter indoors but lived at the back of the house 'where it was bright and sunny' in summer. He was, however, restrained by a long leash stapled to the wall (Agnes Cowper, 60). Management of animals outdoors, especially those with perceived economic value, included ensuring they could not be stolen or stray.

In households with multiple pets, different species might access different spaces, a reflection of compromises reached between animal and human needs. One woman, in service before marriage, expected her Edwardian terrace to outperform the cleanliness of her erstwhile employers. The budgie and cat were allowed indoors; the dog had a kennel outside (Lancaster, F1P). In a late-Victorian Lancaster 'two up, two down' accommodating a family of ten, a mother compromised with an older son: his dog could stay indoors overnight provided he tied it to the table leg (Lancaster, H2L). Other families waited until older children moved out or the family moved to larger premises before they acquired indoor pets (Bolton, 55 c).

Housing pets outdoors helped contain animals and preserve a distinction between indoor human-family and outdoor animal-family space. But pets in backyards could extend domestic interiors too. In one image of a small backyard, a terrier lies on a cushioned chair in front of a kennel, an upturned tin bath and assorted paraphernalia on the kennel roof. The cushion, an addition to the chair, is covered in a dark fabric printed with lighter coloured roses (Hall, 2002, p. 14). In an otherwise utilitarian exterior, the cushion adds a decorative, domestic dimension that suggests attention to the dog's comfort and the permeability of spaces within the boundaries of home. Another photograph shows a dog sat on a chair covered in light printed fabric (Hall, 2002, p. 15). Again, the cushion was removable but its presence softens, visually and materially, a harsh exterior to blur the bounded spaces of home.

Outdoor pets might reflect and perpetuate a sexual division of labour and leisure, then, but they could muddy ideas about gendered space and caring practices too. The father who spent Saturday afternoons grooming his dog in the yard was performing rituals of care commonly associated with mothers and children (Lancaster, H4L). In another family, a father kept bull terriers in the backyard and encouraged his children to keep guinea pigs and rabbits there too. The daily and weekly rituals of pet care (feeding, cleaning out boxes and so on) provided space and time for father-child-animal togetherness that was distinct from an indoor domesticity where mother presided (Bolton, 60b). Successful execution of

such practices necessitated gentleness and familiarity with an animal's behaviour, its fears and pleasures, and were pivotal to forging more abstract bonds of affection (Pearson, 2019; Webb et al., 2020).

Of course, animals did not necessarily respect human boundaries. On arrival in a terraced home, Toby the monkey leapt onto a plate shelf and hurled cups from a tea service to the ground (59). Toby could not know the human values invested in a treasured inheritance (with pawnable value) while it seems unlikely that the humans anticipated Toby's response to a strange environment. Animal behaviour necessitated continuous negotiation of space, boundaries and knowledge. In a photograph taken against the back wall of the house, a terrier lies on a chair looking directly at the camera. In the background, a raised sash window reveals lace curtains and potted plants on the windowsill. Against the prettiness, chicken wire stretches across the open window (Hall, 2002, p. 15). This was possibly to stop birds flying in (although this seems unlikely at ground level in a small backyard) but it is more feasible that the wire was to deter the dog climbing through and knocking the pots over. The drawback for animals in household space was that, as with economic precarity, their status as family often depended on understanding and meeting the (shifting) expectations of humans. If Toby's human family accommodated the smashed china and adapted their safety regime after realising Toby could unfasten (and replace) the buckle of his leash, they also had limits to their embrace of simian behaviour. Hitting adolescence, Toby began to bite his human family. His status moved from that of semi-sibling to nuisance and he was dispatched to the care of New Brighton Zoo (Agnes Cowper, 61).

The flipside to this shaky status was that when families did accommodate animal behaviours at odds with human priorities, it threw into relief the contribution that pets made to home and family life. If we return to John and Benny, the example shows how domestic space and tasks adapted to the changing parameters of their relationship and how Benny's life course shaped the atmosphere of home too. As a younger fox, Benny was John's pet in a bachelor environment with few restrictions. With John's marriage and children, Benny was caged to limit the perceived danger he posed to human family life, his status caught between semi-sibling, rival for father's attention and menacing threat, depending on different family members' perspective. As Benny aged and became unwell, he was a source of concern and care and the human family restricted their movements for his comfort: awareness Benny was dying suspended animation while generating extra labour. Once Benny died, home and family life would tilt once again. There would be the shock of bereavement and the steady removal of Benny's presence, from his contribution to the multi-sensory experience and materiality of home to his needs shaping the rhythm of family life. But even in Benny's physical absence, John's wife thought his memory would continue to shape family life: she expected John's grief on Benny's death to be sufficiently acute it might even tempt him to drink. She might have meant this literally (and commentators like Sparrow often latched onto such phrases to warn against the threat of plebeian male fecklessness) but it seems just as probable that this was a rhetorical device to communicate the gravity of John's anticipated loss (losing Benny would be *that* awful). Death writ large the affectionate bond between man and fox, forged over time through repetitive practices of caring and sharing space, and the influence of that bond on other human members of family.



While the smell, noise and personhood of animals could challenge working-class boundaries of order and hygiene, then, it was these facets of pet keeping that embedded animals in the atmosphere and multi-sensory experience of home. Even small animals and birds exerted an influence on home atmospherics and contributed to notions of what, and who, constituted family space. Birds added to the visual and aural experience of home, especially talking birds that offered colourful language and commentary on family life. Naming birds and caring for them facilitated companionship. British birds were common and could provide a living link with human memories of rural homes and childhoods. Even middle-class commentators, typically disapproving of the small cages that characterised working-class bird keeping, acknowledged that ‘petted little prisoners’ brought ‘brightness’ into otherwise ‘dull grey human lives’ (Scherren, 1902). This theme was picked up in working-class autobiographies, albeit with more complexity than critics’ condescension allowed.

Harry Burton’s memoir noted that he grew up in ‘uninspiring time[s]’ when working-class children’s horizons were ‘so small’ and ‘our tastes so mean’ (48). For Burton, this did not amount to ‘depressed’ (or dull) lives but, rather, facilitated the ‘happiness’ that resided in family togetherness in a ‘comfortable *homely* home’ (his emphasis, 45). Burton recreated a ‘typical’ domestic evening from his childhood: the cat ‘sitting on the table’s edge facing the fire’ purrs as Burton’s mother strokes his head on her way towards the kettle. This was a self-consciously nostalgic vision of the past, sharpened by Burton’s adult sense of not belonging anywhere, a common characteristic of working-class authors who experienced social mobility but who rejected (or were rejected by) middle-class identities and cultures. This wasn’t a named cat either. The generic status diminishes the personhood of a cat the family ‘always’ kept (37). Yet it is the very cattiness of the cat that matters: its familiar place as the family gather around the fire, the sounds the cat makes, the distinctive smell of warm cat, and the practiced tactility between mother and cat. Writing against what middle-class commentators considered the flatness of working-class home life, Burton recreated the sensation of home and family as a dynamic between the human, animal and material.

Grace Foakes’s family living room was crowded: seven people lived, cooked, ate and worked in there. They also made space for the unnamed cat: a ‘cat box’ was kept under a cupboard in the fireside alcove and when Foakes’s father was out, the cat claimed his chair next to the fireplace (39). Like Burton, Foakes was creating the material and atmospheric ‘homely home’: overcrowded and cluttered but the locus of warmth, comfort and togetherness. Again, feline behaviour and physicality, catty indifference to paternal privilege and annoyance at children’s play, was intrinsic to this remembered idea of family life and home as a place of cross species comfort.

In the mid-twentieth century, examples like Burton and Foakes’s recollections of home-family life expressed pride in belonging to a particular place, time and people and sought to complicate the legacies of Victorian commentators on the failings of working-class life. The embodied contribution of animals in these memories was important (or, as Saha observes, ‘vital’ in both senses of the word, Saha, 2017) for claiming the civility and affective tenor (the ‘homeliness’) of lives and spaces that were different from those of Victorian critics and from the standards of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s. Animal companionship clearly demanded sacrifice and negotiation in economic, spatial and labour terms but the habits and practices demanded by pet keeping cultivated ties of obligation

and, given these were obligations that humans chose for themselves, more abstract bonds of comfort and affection.

#### **4. Potent connections & family bonds**

In describing or explaining the contribution of pets to family life, working-class people might draw attention to notions of homely comfort as above but they often accompanied this with accounts of more abstract ties between humans and animals, often the outcome of embodied practices. Moments of cross-species empathy could develop into affective relationships over time. Sociologist Becky Tipper has identified as ‘flashes of recognition’ across species when, for a fleeting moment, humans describe a sense of being at one with an animal, almost as if they feel themselves inhabiting the body and mind of something so very different (2011). This is clearly a privilege of human consciousness but often articulated as a powerful empathetic impulse. Jennifer Mason suggests that flashes of empathy across species can prompt feelings of ‘ineffable kinship’, an ‘affinity’ that is difficult to pin down in empirical data but that rings true (2018). Temporally and spatially located, affinities can be experienced with livestock or wild animals. Sometimes, potent encounters with animal ‘strangers’ can lead to more lasting ties, for example, when humans offer homes to injured or stray animals. Fleeting connections across species could also occur within established pet relationships to influence the character of that companionship.

Again, John and Benny are a good touchstone. John met Benny after rescuing him from a trap. It is likely that the seeing Benny, afraid and in pain, generated a flash of empathetic recognition across species. John’s employer ordered Benny’s destruction. Indeed, John’s role as a gamekeeper was to manage vermin (including fox) populations. Instead, John took Benny home, dressed his wounds and nursed him to moderate health. The intimacy of sleeping together created a specific world of cross-species smell, touch and texture. And for John, there was a bond here born of co-opting Benny in defiance of his master’s instructions. In naming the fox ‘Benny’, a name typically associated with children, John situated the relationship as one of obligation and care. These practices extended the connection between man and fox, literally in making Benny dependent and, for John, in more abstract bonds of linear time and memory, especially once they left the countryside (and bachelorhood). With marriage and fatherhood, man and fox experienced loss although Benny undoubtedly suffered the most. But John’s willingness to renegotiate the boundaries of Benny’s place in the home in order to maintain the relationship testified to the bond between them. The story of John and Benny indicates how strong cross species affinities, forged in particular moments, could develop into a series of obligations and attachments over time. The story also indicates how such relationships shaped, and were shaped by, dynamics with other members of family. In one sense, affinities between humans and animals were never so sharply drawn as when placed in opposition to, or threatened by, the demands of other humans (and sometimes animals).

If John forged his relationship with Benny during his bachelor years, the close connection between working-class men (single and married) and animals was not unusual. Reflecting on rural life in the early twentieth century, John Grout, a Suffolk farmer, observed that ploughmen ‘loved’ their horses and ‘would do more for a horse than



they would for a wife' (Blythe, 1972, pp. 53–6). The majority of surviving accounts of working-class pet keeping draw attention to men's fondness for animals. In 1890s Barrow-in-Furness, a caretaker's earnings had to provide for seven children and a multitude of pets from birds, canaries and squirrels to rabbits, ferrets and dogs. He enjoyed a particularly tactile relationship with Lena, a monkey, who would sit on his lap kissing him (Lancaster, A3B). In Bolton, a sailor gave his sweetheart a parrot, Polly, but long after marriage, the family thought Polly retained a special connection to the sailor (Bolton, 114).

Some of the close connections between men and animals probably related to power and domination: animals, especially dogs, were subordinate in ways that women and children resisted. This could be relatively mild in manifestation: animals might express discontent but it is likely to be less direct (or easier to ignore) than the complaints of a spouse or a confrontation with a truculent child. Most animals would manifest behaviours interpreted as pleasure on seeing the person that fed or cared for them. Of course, middle-class commentators did depict the negative extreme of such human-animal tensions: Bill Sikes, Nancy and Bullseye (Sikes's bull terrier) in *Oliver Twist* (1837) is an obvious example and Sparrow's 'Poverty's Pets' made a throwaway comment about the coster who fondled a rat while kicking his wife merely expressing his disillusionment in marriage (notably, Sparrow didn't appear to have witnessed such a scene but was citing it as hearsay). Dogs were renowned for their fierce loyalty and some sought to intervene in marital or domestic disputes. Unfortunately, dogs that took against nasty husbands tended to be dispatched to other households (Thompson: Embleton). In marriages that were already fractious, pets could get caught in the crossfire and deliberately injured or cast out as 'revenge' for some real or imagined slight (Bolton, 104).

We are used, thanks to commentators' (and historians) preoccupation with working-class male violence, to think of plebeian masculinity in negative terms even though, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were plenty of working-class households living peaceably in family togetherness (Strange, 2015). The particular association between men and pets probably reflects the pleasure men took in the (apparently) uncomplaining devotion of animals. Practices of grooming, cleaning, feeding and walking – especially when rooted in spaces and cultures of masculine leisure – enabled men who craved physical tactility and tenderness to satisfy those cravings without being asked for much in return. Touching, as others have observed, is 'a material encounter with psychic effects' (Saha, 2017). The kisses of the monkey Lena sat on the caretaker's lap draws attention to the potential intimate tactility of pet relations. Photographs can be suggestive here too. A standing man reaches to touch the back of a seated dog's neck (Hall, 2002, p. 15). In some images, men cradle a dog: cupping a dog's back end, holding her upper body against his chest, front paws resting lightly on an arm (Hall, 2000, p. 14). Elsewhere, a seated man wraps an arm round the back end of the terrier on his lap as his fingertip touches her front paw. (Hall, 2002, p. 135) The arrangements were possibly disciplinary although none shows actual restraint. Mostly, they are tender, highlighting the embodied character of human-animal relations: smooth fur touched by coarse fabrics and calloused hands, the weight and warmth of bodies that rest against each other, the grip of (and resistance to) touch, and the feel, smell and taste of another being's breath.

Historians of animals have pointed to the paradoxical character of human disciplinary regimes that relied upon enacting tactile violence *and* care towards animals (Fudge, 2018: 177; Webb et al., 2020). But for the most part, domestic tactility fostered a shared sense of

pleasure and attachment against a backdrop of containment, management and – for some humans – deprivation of other senses and resources. Grace Foakes was explicit about how cross-species touch cultivated affection. Combining the pleasures of tactile practices and being needed, she recalled that her rabbits’ ‘soft silky fur, their twitching noses, long ears, beautiful eyes and their helplessness made me love them as I have never loved an animal before or since’ (21). Foakes also remembered lying under bedcovers with her cat purring as she ‘strok[ed] and lov[ed] her until we both fell asleep’ (185). In a world of relatively coarse textiles, furry, wet-nosed, rough-tongued pets offered tactile engagement with strokes, nips, licks, tickles and warmth (Bourke, 2020). As Foakes notes, these habits and the sensations produced could be categorised in retrospect as learning about emotional connections. They were emotional practices (Scheer, 2012).

Children could forge particular bonds with animals through tactility and resistance to authority. Less invested in adult hierarchies of power and order, children could readily imagine pets as playmates and semi-siblings. One little girl wept bitterly when her mother refused to let their cat use the pram (still a luxury for many working-class families) as a bed (Lancaster, D1P), exposing conflicting hierarchies of economy, priority and status. For the girl, the difference between a small dependent cat and human sibling was minimal. Sympathy between children and pets often sprang from children’s appropriation of animals as allies in subversion. One Bolton man was given a terrier pup, Billy, as a boy. The dog was a ‘fierce little thing’ but this heightened the affinity between boy and dog: he wasn’t afraid of Billy, the dog trusted him and they required no words (or commands): ‘I could look at it and it knew’. Billy was ‘cute’ (short for acute in Bolton dialect) and words he did know were a source of shared comedy: ‘say “BATH” and you wouldn’t find him for a fortnight’. The ability to intuit humour and intention suggested shared boy-dog sympathy against a world of adult rules and boundaries. In narrating the story, the periodic reference to Billy as ‘it’ put the friendship and Billy’s personhood in a childish past but this was shot through with references to ‘little Billy’, a phrase that suggested the ongoing affective pull of their former intimacy and inter-dependency (Bolton, 55 c).

Some child-pet alignments were explicitly about resistance to adult power. When Grace Foakes lured the family cat into bed on winter nights, she knew her hygiene-obsessed mother would be furious but the subterfuge was intrinsic to the forging of girl-cat intimacy. Such stories helped Foakes craft a broader narrative of developing cross-species empathy that fostered a commitment to animal welfare in adulthood (185). Similarly, the wild rabbit in Foakes’s story hovered between ‘baby’ sibling to be cared for and trained, and animal impervious to human priorities. Children could delight in the rabbit’s mischief because he mostly got away with it. In the Bolton sailor’s home, Polly the parrot afforded the children ‘an enormous amount of amusement’ by stealing Granny’s thimble, refusing (shouting ‘Oh no’) to bring it back and shouting abuse to drunken men in the street. Polly’s ability to get away with bad behaviour increased her humour value. Described as ‘ugly as sin’, Polly subverted norms of appropriate behaviour, especially the gendered rules of being a good girl. She became a kind of Mr Punch in family life that reflected children’s esteem for naughtiness while potentially diminishing Polly’s personhood into a source of comic entertainment (Bolton, 114).

Of course, children exercised power in relationships with pets too, recruiting animals to act out fantasies, dress in human clothes or adopt anthropomorphised roles (Lancaster, A3B). Grace Foakes and her siblings made toys for their cat but they also liked to

deliberately annoy her (24), a tactic that could, as Soares notes in this special issue, help children learn boundaries between teasing and cruelty and develop understandings of a pet's character. For other children, pets could move between playmate (the sheepdog that permitted children to ride on his back) and amenable protector (Bolton, 104). One girl growing up in early 1900s Durham commandeered her dog into evening prayers before they climbed the stairs to bed together (Thompson: Skinner). Stories where animals, especially dogs, were moral exemplars were a staple of didactic fiction. But they could operate in memory to say something positive about working-class childhood too, offering depictions of cross-species domestic order, care and affection against a backdrop of limited economic resource and observers' negative assumptions about cultural and affective lives.

Affinities between children and animals could produce or spring from revelations about the injustices of the wider world. Foakes was explicit about this, reflecting on the fate of stray cats as a means of establishing the sensibilities of her siblings, girls that 'cry in sympathy for the poor creatures' (183–5). Elsewhere, a boy 'broke my heart' after his father dispatched the pet rabbit that had just given birth asserting he could not support more rabbits. The shock of grief accentuated the boy's attachment to his rabbit and his bafflement at the seemingly random act of cruelty: 'Oh I cried mind. I thought a lot of the old Dutch rabbit. Yes' (Thompson, Morris). For some writers, childhood experiences with animals were more explicitly aligned with a class politics. Joseph Stamper recalled his visceral horror when, as a boy, he saw a woman burn the eyes of her 'pet' thrush (believed to enhance the bird's song). The sound (a 'faint sizzle'), sight and smell (a 'tiny thread of smoke') produced, even in memory, the shock of recognition between boy and bird: it was as if, Stamper wrote, he 'could feel the hot needle going into my eye'. Stamper used this powerful flash of cross-species kinship to declaim broader cruelties in agricultural economies and elite sports (docking dogs' tails, fishing and, worst of all, stag hunting), turning the tables on common conceptions of class-based animal cruelty in line with bigger themes of the memoir: casual disregard for animal suffering and the impunity of the elite is an allegory for broader inequities (Stamper, 1960, pp. 78–81).

Tactility and bonds of kinship between humans and animals could have adverse effects for other family members. Reflecting on the kisses and strokes between her father and Lena, a monkey, his adult daughter was struck by how much her mother resented the relationship: she 'detested' the monkey (Lancaster, A3B). Earlier in the interview, this narrator allowed that her mother was grudgingly fond of the monkey suggesting that animals could get caught in the crossfire of inter-personal tensions that had little to do with animal behaviour per se. Rather, some accounts of human–animal affinities provided a medium to explain broader family dynamics and alliances. Such was the affinity between Polly (a parrot) and the sailor that brought her home that she apparently began to shed feathers whenever she sensed the sailor's ship approaching shore (some distance from their inland Bolton home). Moving house years later, the sailor's wife insisted there was no space for irascible Polly and told her to 'kick the bucket'. When she died overnight, there was a 'real family row about it'. Years later, the story helped give meaning to family life: aligning Polly, a bird that swore and behaved badly, with the Father enabled his offspring to comment on a man who was absent from home most of the time, his romantic (implicitly, irresponsible) nature and the Mother's resilience in the face of it (Bolton, 114). That the children also periodically aligned themselves with Polly

highlights the conflicted layers of sympathy and allegiance between children, parents (or spouses) and animals.

In some memories, a father's tender regard for his pets functioned to demonstrate that he was a feeling man more generally, a potentially useful device if there was a paucity of evidence for his manifest affection for children. A South Wales carpenter permitted an elderly cat to sit on his shoulder at teatime; an Oxfordshire chimney sweep wouldn't dream of eating a meal without his children or dog; a Durham tea dealer chewed food for the elderly terrier that sat beside him at the table (Thompson: Thomas; Morgan; Skinner). Such anecdotes could work in reverse too. Grace Foakes related the story of her father drowning the cat's kittens in the kitchen copper every time it gave birth (animal welfare charities would have endorsed this). When the cat had 'grown old and dirty in its habits', father decided to drown that too. The cat put up a fight and Foakes and her mother cajoled Father into letting the cat live (205). The story enabled Foakes to develop her narrative of family sensibilities and loyalties. Mother's sympathy for the older cat reflected her identity as the *feeling* centre of family life against Father's apparent detachment.

As Foakes's anecdote indicates, women were not actively hostile to pets, not least because so many of them ended up doing animal care. And, clearly, some women did forge attachments to particular animals. Sidney Day noted that his family dogs typically belonged to his father and lived in outdoor kennels. The exception was a stray whippet type dog, Nel, that his mother took in at the outset of World War One. Nel's status reflected the gendered character of family life. Unlike father's outdoor bull terriers that were part of a masculine culture of pedigree breed and the pub, Nel was a stray mongrel who appealed to mother's compassion (8–9). In the context of Day's father going to war, Nel's invitation into the marital bed ostensibly had a practical function: to warm mother's feet. But in inhabiting this most intimate of spaces, the tactile comfort of Nel's presence potentially held more abstract associations of reassurance and affection in the context of an absent husband. Nel's expectations and responses to care were, like those of other animals, interpreted as signifiers of mutual affection and need. Likewise, in moments of uncertainty, the practical and relatively uncomplicated task of caring for a dog could offer some reciprocal stability and security. It is notable that of the few photographs that survive of working-class families and their pets up to 1914, many of them include sons or husbands about to go to war. It wasn't just men's dogs that were included either. One shows four soldier sons, a father with his mastiff and mother holding an overweight spaniel type on her knee (Hall, 2002, p. 54). That dogs were included indicates how, in key moments of togetherness, humans could grant animals full membership of family.

For some narrators, the inclusion of animals in family togetherness had affective implications for human members. Margaret Penn was adopted as a baby but only learned this as a juvenile. Her memoir credits her adoptive family for their care and affection that, in the memoir at least, was no different from that shown to their biological children. An extended anecdote relating the death of the family cat, Mick, exemplifies Penn's depiction of inclusion. The entire family, male and female, adults and children, held an elaborate funeral for Mick in the garden of their semi-rural home (Penn., 1947, pp. 114–6). In the context of Penn's life story, this was not simply about affection for a cat although she was at pains to express the family's esteem for Mick's personhood. The story also functioned as

evidence of her family's willingness to extend the practices and privileges of kinship beyond blood.

## 5. Class and animal companions

The choices people made in precarious or restricted material circumstances exposes the classed character of pet keeping and the 'hierarchical entanglement' of human-animal relations. Resources of time, space and money shaped what pets were possible to keep, where they were kept and how relationships with those animals were forged. Human access to resources also tended to dictate when animal lives and companionship ended and, in a context where burial in one of the new commercial pet cemeteries was expensive, how animal remains were disposed. Animal companionship exposed other kinds of hierarchies too, especially those of patriarchal privilege and the authority of adults over children.

Despite their importance to experiences and ideas of family time and home, pets' inclusion in family membership was often contingent on economic circumstance, even for pets with particularly strong affinities or connections with humans. Pets' 'animal' status rendered them the members of families most vulnerable to broader structural inequities. As Erica Fudge notes, human capacity to place 'material and immaterial value' on animals renders the complexity of these relationships meaningful: ties were forged with animals in spite of the possibility that such ties might be short lived (2018:154–5). Far from exposing the callowness of working people, the sadness of surrendering pets in times of economic hardship, the difficulty of identifying whose needs to prioritise when, or the demand to sacrifice time and space to accommodate pets speaks to the particularities of working-class people's navigation of the risks and rewards of developing affectionate bonds with animals.

In reading for the representation of pets from working-class perspectives, it is possible to gauge the emotional significance human members of families invested in animal companions and how conceptions of home and family could be expanded to include animals, even while such bonds were tentative. Pets contributed to the lived experience of the working-class home with their tactile, material bodies and affective behaviours. The imaginative encounter (Fudge, 2008) between humans and animals generated empathy across species, but it contributed other kinds of imaginative work too, enabling humans to construct understandings of what working-class home, family and belonging meant in real time and retrospect. For some adults, memories of pets were intrinsic to inscribing working-class lives and culture with meaning and significance. This could be overtly politicised, as in the case of Joseph Stamper, but it was also implicit in the seemingly nostalgic recreations of the past that staked a claim for working-class generosity, resourcefulness and cultures of affect. Narrators could identify pets – and animals more broadly – as allies in rejecting external assumptions that working-class families needed 'guidance' in developing their emotional and moral cosmos to demonstrate, rather, how hierarchies of power and access to resources created the parameters of opportunity for humans and animals. There might well be pet practices and, indeed, other affective experiences that cross social classes but such comparisons tend to mediate, however unintentionally, those practices by attaching value to middle-class norms at the expense of working-class culture. This essay has argued that 'family' was classed for humans and animals in this

period, that family life included animals as affective agents, and that working-class people invested cross-species relationships with complex meaning that was distinct to a specific socio-economic context.

## Acknowledgments

This paper was part of an AHRC funded project with Jane Hamlett, 'Pets and Family Life, 1837-1960'. Thanks to the Research Associates Lesley Hoskins, Rebecca Preston and Luke Kelly. For constructive feedback on drafts of this essay thanks to Claudia Soares and *History of the Family* reviewers.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

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## Oral History Collections

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